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SUBJ

AFGHANISTAN, AFF VIEWS IMPORTANCE OF 'STINGER' MISSILES

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MONG LONG AFF IN ENGLISH 1000 GMT 27 SEP 87

((TEXT)) ISLAMABAD, SEPT 27 (A.F.P.)--U.S.-SUPPLIED "STINGER" MISSILES HAVE CHANGED THE COMPLEXION OF THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN AND ALLOWED AFGHAN REBELS TO SET UP "REAL SANCTUARIES" AGAINST SOVIET FORCES, A FRENCH SPECIALIST ON THE CONFLICT SAYS.

"THE EFFICIENCY OF THE U.S.-MADE GROUND-TO-AIR STINGERS HAS "CONSIDERABLY" ALTERED THE SITUATION BY PROVIDING THE REBELS WITH SHELTERED ENCLAVES. OLIVIER ROY SAID IN AN INTERVIEW WITH AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE HERE SATURDAY.

MR. ROY, 36, WHO WORKS FOR FRANCE'S NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, RECENTLY SPENT TWO MONTHS AND A HALF IN AFGHANISTAN; HIS SEVENTH TRIP TO THE COUNTRY SINCE THE SOVIET INTERVENTION IN 1979.

MR. ROY SAID AN IRONIC EFFECT OF THE STINGERS HAD BEEN TO CUT SOVIET LOSSES. "SOVIET LOSSES HAVE STOPPED INCREASING BECAUSE THEY NO LONGER VENTURE OUT BY PLANE OR HELICOPTER ABOVE AREAS WHERE THERE ARE STINGERS," HE SAID.

THE UNITED STATES BEGAN SUPPLYING AFGHAN RESISTANCE GROUPS WITH AN ESTIMATED SEVERAL HUNDRED OF THE SHOULDER-FIRED RADIO-GUIDED MISSILES ABOUT A YEAR AGO.

"THE STINGERS HAVE EFFECTIVELY CHANGED THE EQUATION (IN AFGHANISTAN). THEY HAVE ALLOWED THE RESISTANCE TO SET UP REAL SANCTUARIES," THE FRENCH RESEARCHER SAID, ADDING THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE HAD TO LIMIT THEIR ACTIVITIES TO DEFENDING LARGE CITIES AND COMMUNICATION LINES.

MR. ROY SAID HE SAW "ONLY JETS" DURING HIS TRIP AND HAD TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS ONLY WHEN CROSSING PAVED ROADS IN THE NORTH OF THE COUNTRY. HE VISITED THE PROVINCES OF PAKTIA, GHAZNI, VARDAK, BACHKAN, TAKHAR AND BADAKHSHAN FROM MID-JULY TO LATE SEPTEMBER, LOGGING A TOTAL OF 3,000 KILOMETERS.

"HELICOPTERS HAVE DISAPPEARED FROM THE AFGHAN SKY," MR. ROY SAID, "EXCEPT TO ESCORT CONVOYS AND ATTACK MASSOUD (A REBEL LEADER IN NORTHEAST AFGHANISTAN) WHO DOESN'T HAVE STINGERS."

THE ESTIMATED 115,000 SOVIET TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN HAVE CONCENTRATED ON (DEFENDING) LARGE CITIES AND SOME COMMUNICATION ROUTES, THE EXPERT U.S. IN LIAISON BEING THEIR MAIN PRIORITY," HE SAID. "THE SOVIETS NO LONGER ATTACK EXCEPT TO DISSENTANGLE THEMSELVES AND SEEK TO AVOID HUMAN LOSSES."

MR. ROY SAID, ADDING THAT THEY DEFENDED THEIR POSITIONS WITH ARTILLERY "OF FORTIFIABLE PRECISION." "THE REBELS OCCUPY ALL AREAS VACATED BY SOVIET TROOPS BUT HAVE A LOT OF DIFFICULTY IN WORKING OUT A COORDINATED STRATEGY TO ATTACK VITAL ZONES WHERE THE SOVIETS HAVE RETREATED," HE SAID.

"WE ARE BACK TO A PRE-1984-SITUATION WHICH WERE DIFFICULT YEARS FOR SOVIET OFFENSIVES, MOST DONE BY THE LARGE-SCALE USE OF AIRBORNE COMMANDOS," ACCORDING TO THE FRENCH SPECIALIST, WHO BELIEVES THE SOVIETS HAVE NOT DECIDED WHETHER TO DEAL WITH THE NEW SITUATION THROUGH WARFARE OR NEGOTIATIONS.

THSVC CLEAR YOUR SUSPENSE

\*\*\*CORRECTED COPY\*\*\*

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HE SAID THE SOVIET-BACKED AFGHAN GOVERNMENT'S ARMY WAS "A PITTYFUL FAILURE." BUT THE "MAD SECRET POLICE, THE INTERIOR MINISTRY'S PARAMILITARY TROOPS AND LOCAL MILITIAS WHO HAD JOINED THE REGIME FOR TRIBAL REASONS, WERE EFFICIENT."

MR. ROY NOTED AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF THE WEAPONS USED BY THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE, SAYING THEY ARE ARMED AND EVEN OVERLY-ARMED.

"THEY HAVE ACCUMULATED A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF WEAPONS. THERE IS NO MORE SHORTAGE. THE OLD BRITISH LEE-ENFIELD RIFLES HAVE VIRTUALLY DISAPPEARED, EVERYBODY HAS KARASAKOV'S," HE SAID.

THE EXCESS OF WEAPONS EVEN IN CALM AREAS COULD THREATEN TO TURN AFGHANISTAN INTO ANOTHER "LEBANON," BY THE CREATION OF MILITIAS LED BY WARLORDS, HE SAID.

MR. ROY TRAVELLED WITH SEVERAL RESISTANCE GROUPS DURING HIS TRIP, INCLUDING THE MODERATE HAKKAT, THE MODERATELY-RELIGIOUS "JAMIA", THE RADICAL MEH-E-ISLAM OF GULBUDIN, MIRKATYAR AND OTHER SHIITE GROUPS.

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